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Time To Sharpen The Proverbial Saw

The downturn gives time to review, change and reskill; activities which are impossible during the high tide

“FROM the day an employee joins TeamLease, training becomes a very important part of the curriculum, whether it is process training or behavioural training,” comments Mr. Mohit Gupta. The first five days of an employee’s tenure at TeamLease entail a detailed and standard induction programme. This programme is structured to give the employee an overview of the organisation and its various SBUs, and the relationships between teams. It goes right down to a detailed explanation by a mentor on his/her specific KRAs. Post induction, 5 per cent of an employee’s time during the first 3 months is spent on detailed functional training. This exposes the employee to the processes and the usage of the various ERPs that the team might use. Instructor-led functional training is also supplemented by e-learning modules on a Learning Management System (LMS) which can be accessed by employees using their individual logins.

The role of each team player also demands specific skill sets. For this, requisite soft skills are identified, and customised programmes (such as telephone etiquette and query handling for the central customer service team) is periodically rolled out with an external vendor. Advanced training such as that on managerial skills forms a part of development training which is assigned to training partners.

The training objective is to give employees the best support to help them achieve the highest levels of productivity. Standardised and well implemented processes also ensure the highest level of service delivery to all stakeholders. Mr. Gupta says, “At TeamLease, we treat ev-

ery downturn as an opportunity to build new muscle and provide training. The downturn gives you the bandwidth to review, refocus and sharpen the proverbial saw. Teams undergo training audits to ensure employee performance is audited and shortcomings addressed through rigorous training.” Training budgets are absolutely necessary as the downturn provides time for review, change, audit and reskilling. This is not possible during the high tide when everyone is running to cope with the exponential growth.

Each team has functional trainers (existing employees who are excellent at processes and taken through customised ‘train-the-trainer’ modules). So while there is a slight reduction in external training, there is a steep increase in internal training. Performance audits happen on the metrics vis-à-vis the training undergone, and are assessed every quarter. There are opportunities to reassess programmes, and even add to the existing programmes to increase effectiveness. Mr. Gupta says that process efficiency and productivity enhancement are the key focus areas to be considered during the slowdown. Their training is inward-focussed and checks if they can improve on the speed of response and quality of service.

Mr. Gupta is of the opinion that internal trainers are fantastic at functional training as they are experts in their areas of work. They also draw from their own experiences which are very industry specific, therefore bringing a lot of credibility to the training. For external


trainers to be successful, they would need to do a lot of homework to ensure that the content relates to the trainees’ area of work. This is often the single biggest drawback in external training. However, external trainers are better when it comes to soft skills training.

Although there is a strong e-learning system which contains detailed modules, it can never be exhaustive. They believe that real-time situations and challenges are better explained through instructor-led sessions.

Potential trainers are handpicked across SBUs based on stringent selection criteria and taken through an intensive ‘train-the-trainer’ programme. This ensures that they have the skills to convert knowledge into learning. To attain the status of a ‘trainer’ is extremely motivating for employees who aspire to add value to their job profiles. The key

challenge is to streamline the entire training process, wherein trainers are not overly burdened with training responsibilities at the cost of their KRAs. Once that is achieved, thousands of hours of effective functional training can be carried out at a minimal cost.

Commenting on the role of external service providers during the downturn, Mr.

Gupta said that they need to customise their solutions further and be accountable for measuring improvements in the areas of their training. The need for general, ‘feel-good’ training will reduce. Talking about companies famous for training, he recalls Walt Disney (who started the Disney University). 

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